

Message Text

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44

ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCA-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 INRE-00 OES-06 SAM-01 NSF-02 /055 W

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FM AMCONSUL ROTTERDAM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2105

AMCONSUL AMSTERDAM

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

UNCLAS ROTTERDAM 479

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC

SUBJECT: KARL THOMAS, BALLOONIST, ARRIVES IN ROTTERDAM

1. KARL THOMAS ARRIVED IN ROTTERDAM SAFELY TODAY ABOARD THE SOVIET FREIGHTER "DEKABRIST". HE IS PHYSICALLY FIT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A BROKEN RIB AND A FEW MINOR CUTS. HE WAS MET BY HIS WIFE, MICHELLE THOMAS AND HIS MOTHER. MR. THOMAS SAID HE WOULD STAY HERE FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS BEFORE RETURNING TO U.S.

2. THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF PRESS AND TELEVISION INTEREST IN HIS BALLOON JOURNEY AND RESCUE BY THE DEKABRIST. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, THE AMERICAN ABC, CBS AND NBC TV REPRESENTATIVES WERE ON HAND TO PHOTOGRAPH AND QUESTION HIM. THEIR HOME OFFICES SEE A GREAT DEAL OF HUMAN INTEREST IN HIS STORY WHICH THEY WANT TO SHOW ON THEIR TV PROGRAMS THIS EVENING IN THE U.S. A CORRESPONDENT OF THE DETROIT FREE PRESS AND TIME MAGAZINE WERE ALSO THERE, AS WELL AS THE DUTCH NOS TV CAMERAMEN AND SEVERAL DUTCH NEWSPAPERS. THOMAS GAVE A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE STORM WHICH CAUSED HIS BALLOON TO COLLAPSE 800 MILES OFF NEWFOUNDLAND.

3. THOMAS WAS VERY LAUDATORY ABOUT THE CARE HE WAS GIVEN BY
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CAPTAIN V. EGOROV AND THE CREW OF THE DEKABRIST. THEY WENT

TO GREAT PAINS TO GIVE HIM GOOD MEDICAL ATTENTION AND TO
MAKE HIM COMFORTABLE.

4. THE CITY OF ROTTERDAM ALSO WAS VERY HOSPITABLE TOWARDS HIM.
ACTING BURGOMASTER VAN DER PLOEG RECEIVED THOMAS AT THE
CITY HALL TODAY ALONG WITH HIS WIFE AND MOTHER. THE PRESS AND
TV WERE ALSO THERE IN FORCE AND TOOK NUMEROUS PICTURES OF
THE ACTING BURGOMASTER WITH THOMAS AND CAPTAIN EGOROV.

COMMENT: BOTH THE PRESS AND TV PEOPLE WERE PERPLEXED AND AMUSED
BY THE UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF ATTENTION BEING GIVEN TO THOMAS. THE
ABC MAN WAS SENT HERE ALL THE WAY FROM ANGOLA TO DO AN INTERVIEW.
THE MEDIA SEEMED TO AGREE THAT THE US PUBLIC WILL BE RECEPTIVE
TO A HUMAN INTEREST STORY ABOUT AN ADVENTUROUS YOUNG MAN WHO
CAME OUT OF A POTENTIAL DISASTER ALIVE AND HAPPY.
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